New Resources Available on Youth Reproductive Health and HIV Prevention

A roadmap can help in using the growing number of reports, program summaries, and training materials.

A growing number of policies and programs are attempting to help young people practice healthy sexual behaviors, improve reproductive health, and prevent sexually transmitted infections (STIs), including HIV. What follows is a roadmap to some of the most recent documents synthesizing major findings in this field, organized by overview reports, summaries of agency programs/publications, bibliography/data, and reference and training materials.

Overview Reports

Advancing Young Adult Reproductive Health: Actions for the Next Decade. Washington, DC: FOCUS on Young Adults, 2001.
http://www.fhi.org/en/youth/youthnet/prog/focus.html This 160-page report summarizes the findings of the FOCUS on Young Adults program (1995-2001), the first USAID program funded to focus on youth and reproductive health. It emphasized the need to: 1) create a supportive environment with good policies and the promotion of social norms and cultural practices favorable to the provision and use of reproductive health; 2) improve knowledge, attitudes, skills, and behaviors of youth through schools, mass media, community-based efforts, and the workplace; and 3) increase the use of reproductive health services by youth through youth-friendly services, youth centers, linked school and health facility programs, private sector initiatives, and social marketing and mass media. The report summarizes 39 rigorously evaluated programs and other studies and programs.

Focus on Young Adults Materials.
http://www.fhi.org/en/youth/youthnet/prog/focus.html Other materials published in recent years include “how to” guides, research and policy reports, “In Focus” briefs, project highlights, and summaries of state of the art training meetings. For example, see:


■ Shah, MK, Zambezi R, Simasiku M. Listening to Young Voices: Facilitating Participatory Appraisals on Reproductive Health with Adolescents (1999), a summary of a Zambia project and steps in using this process.

http://www.populationaction.org/resources/publications/InThisGeneration/InThisGeneration.pdf
This analysis of policies in seven countries concludes that, with the notable exception of The Netherlands, the other countries (Ghana, India, Iran, Mali, Mexico, and the United States) have not responded well to the reproductive health needs of youth. The Dutch experience suggests that policies supporting open communication about sexuality and making services available to youth benefit their reproductive health. The study also identifies successful policies in developing countries, including mandatory premarital courses on sexual and reproductive health issues for engaged couples in Iran, strong presidential leadership promoting AIDS prevention activities in Uganda, educational policies that help keep girls from entering the sex industry in Thailand, and others in Senegal, Mexico, and Chile. Among recommendations are laws to reduce early marriage, improvements in sexuality and life skills education, and better coordination of youth policies.

**Kiragu K. Youth and HIV/ AIDs: Can we avoid catastrophe. Popul Rep 2001;L(12):1-40.**
http://www.jhuccp.org/pr/l12edsum.shtml
The report shows why young people need to be at the center of strategies to control the epidemic, including their vulnerability to HIV, outreach needs, and the consequences of inaction. The report, with 440 footnotes, recommends building support among leaders for AIDS prevention, providing skills as well as information through HIV/AIDS education programs, involving communities to change social norms that contribute to risky behaviors, promoting condoms, providing more youth-friendly services, and reaching out to particularly vulnerable groups such as street children and young sex workers.

**McCauley AP, Salter C. Meeting the needs of young adults. Popul Rep 1995;J(41):1-44.**
http://www.jhuccp.org/pr/j41edsum.stm
The 1995 overview of young adults provides a valuable reference point for conceptualizing issues and for understanding how this field has evolved.

This review of about 300 U.S. and Canadian studies identifies risk and protective factors that affect adolescent sexual behavior, and the most effective types of programs from an analysis of 75 studies that met rigorous research criteria. Among the sexuality and HIV education programs, the review found 10 common characteristics of effective programs, including focusing clearly on sexual behavior and contraceptive use and delivering a clear message. In addition, certain types of service-learning programs led to lower teenage pregnancy, even though they focused on community service and a reflection process but not on sexuality. The 186-page report includes references and a summary of the 75 studies reviewed closely. These findings come from U.S. and Canadian studies and may not apply in the same way in developing countries. (For more, see YouthLens Number 2, Sexuality and Family Life Education.)

**Summaries of Agency Programs/ Publications**

http://www.popcouncil.org/frontiers/orta/pbriefs/adolescence_1.html
In the 1990s, the Population Council conducted 11 operations research studies on youth reproductive health interventions in six sub-Saharan Africa countries. This thematic summary concludes that school-based family life education programs have been effective but that two other popular types of programs — multipurpose youth centers and peer education programs — have not been shown to be effective.
Barnett B, Katz K. Adolescent Reproductive Health: Navigating between Needs and Services. Research Triangle Park, NC: Family Health International, 2000. Synthesizing findings from more than 70 projects on adolescent reproductive health undertaken by FHI since the 1980s, the report identifies future needs as seeing the larger picture of young people’s lives, sustaining behavior change, preparing and empowering providers to serve youth, intervening before a problem occurs, improving services for pregnant teenagers and their partners, evaluating programs, getting policymakers and program managers involved in programs at an early stage, and emphasizing the three “r’s” — responsibility, respect, and risk reduction.


Summarizing 34 WHO studies on young people conducted primarily from 1992-1996 in 20 countries, this report identifies common themes, reviews individual findings, and discusses policy and program implications. The study found major gender differences in the ability to negotiate sexual activity and contraceptive use. It recommended: more youth-friendly sexual and reproductive health services; more counseling on sexuality, pregnancy, post-abortion care and family planning; and sex education programs that are age-appropriate. The report stresses the importance of involving young people and parents in communicating information and promoting access to confidential and private services.


Bibliography/ Data

NETWORK ARTICLES HIGHLIGHT YOUNG PEOPLE


Reference and Training Materials


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